

Methane fuel lines win out over trucking

January 14, 2010

By KEVIN FAULCONER



District 2 City Councilmember Kevin Faulconer, at podium, flanked by Mayor Jerry Sanders, left, unveiled a proposal last month to use existing SDG&E fuel lines to transport excess methane gas from the city's wastewater facility instead of trucking the volatile gas through Peninsula neighborhood streets. COURTESY PHOTO

Some of the best environmental news in San Diego last year surfaced a few weeks ago in Point Loma.

On Dec. 15, I had the honor of announcing a groundbreaking environmental project that will use existing SDG&E fuel lines to transport excess methane gas from the city's Wastewater Treatment Plant. The gas will be recycled and used as renewable electricity.

This first-of-its-kind project is expected to eliminate the release of 1.1 million cubic feet of global warming gases each day from the treatment plant, and generate a small amount of revenue for the City.

The original plan called for using trucks to haul compressed natural gas — 85 percent methane and 15 percent carbon dioxide — from the plant to two local sites.

Many of you contacted me to share your concerns about trucking methane through our neighborhoods. I shared those concerns and together we came up with a safer alternative and a better plan.

The collaboration and the results reaffirmed my belief that government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished.

I owe a special thanks to Point Loma residents John Pederson and Jim Gilhooly, who were among the driving forces behind the new plan.

Mr. Pederson heads the group Citizens for a Green and Safe Point Loma, which had this to say about the new plan:

“Point Loma residents are very pleased with the revised outcome for the handling and distribution of excess methane gas from the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Facility. Utilizing the existing SDG&E pipeline to transport the gas instead of trucking through our residential neighborhoods is a practical, green and safe solution. We are grateful for all the community support. This new solution gives us hope and reaffirms the notion that we can make a difference in our community when residents become involved along with our elected officials.”

On Dec. 8, the San Diego City Council voted unanimously to amend a contract between the City and BioFuels Energy LLC that calls for recycling methane gas from the city’s Wastewater Treatment Plant. The contract had been in place for a while. What changed is how the gas will be transferred once the project begins in 2011.

A Dec. 19 editorial in The San Diego Union-Tribune put it this way: “This project is a win for the city, a win for BioFuels and SDG&E and a win for the environment. We applaud it.”

I applaud the Point Loma community for rallying behind this improved plan. It proves that together we can accomplish great things for our neighborhoods.

— *Kevin Faulconer sits on the San Diego City Council as the representative for District 2, which includes Point Loma, Ocean Beach and Mission Beach.*